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## **A Content Analysis of Direct and Indirect Cigarette ADS**

### **Introduction**

Advertising and promotions of cigarettes has been a keenly debated issue all over the world. In many developed countries, cigarette advertising and promotions are totally banned or restricted. In contrast, in many developing countries, cigarette advertising is freely allowed or they exist in other forms. The tobacco industry worldwide, dominated by a few gigantic transnational tobacco corporations, have fought hard for means and ways to advertise and promote their products. In facts, there is a trend worldwide to use indirect ads full of imagery to promote the cigarette brands.

In Malaysia, direct cigarette advertising on television was banned by the government in 1982. However, since then, the tobacco companies managed to circumvent the ban by making use of the brand names of the major cigarette brands to indirectly advertise in the mass media. The tobacco industry called this form of advertising Trademark Diversification (TMD) ads. It is referred to as indirect cigarette ads. In 1994, the government again took steps to ban direct cigarette ads in the local print media. However, just as it was with television, the indirect advertisements featuring cigarette brand names are still allowed in the local print media. Tobacco critics such as the consumer activists and health groups have criticized this practice. They claimed that the tobacco companies may be using them to accomplish essentially the same marketing objectives as direct advertising. In an attempt to address this issue, a content analysis of both the direct and indirect cigarette ads of the print media was carried out. The content

analysis is aimed at examining the themes inherent in the direct and indirect cigarette advertisements as well as their differences in the themes.

### Literature Review

A search of the literature revealed that cigarette advertisements have been a popular subject of study. Several content analysis of print cigarette advertisements are found. Many of these studies are based on the premise that advertising is one of the major promotional elements used by the cigarette manufacturers (Weinberger *et.al.*, 1981).

Pollay (1990) studied 394 Canadian cigarette advertisements from 14 magazines in 1987 to determine their information and imagery content. Pollay used 16 categories he developed for an earlier study (1984) of the information content of advertisements. He found that there is very little information in most cigarette advertisements, and that they are dominated by visuals. The most frequent information found in the advertisements (appearing in more than half of all the advertisements) are those pertaining to performance (taste); product variations; contents absent; and quality (p.76). The advertisements are also analyzed for the existence of 12 themes which can be categorized into the product-cost-benefit reasons for which consumers make their purchases, i.e., well made, good deal, and to enjoy. Pollay found that the healthfulness of the product and its associated life styles - such as outdoor and adventuresome activities - occurred most frequently. This phenomenon is vastly similar to the results of studies of cigarette advertisements conducted by the same author in the US.

In another research, Pollay (1991) studied the use of verbal and visual signs and symbols to communicate pictures of health by American cigarette advertisers. He used content analysis to identify the frequency of 12 categories of themes and tactics of 567 cigarette advertisements from two magazines (*LIFE* and *LOOK*) from 1938-1983. Pollay found that the healthiness theme is manifested in the majority of American cigarette advertisements throughout the period of study. However, he observed a change in the communication strategy of the healthiness theme of the cigarette advertisements from verbal ones before the late 1950s to visual ones in the wake of

the health scare of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The healthiness theme was mainly communicated by employing people and settings that were the "very pictures of health" (p.170).

Ringold (1987) used longitudinal analysis to study the information content of 211 cigarette advertisements in four magazines from 1926-1985. Specifically, the author studied the frequency and type of claims or statements in the advertisements. Ringold discovered that health related information was one of the most frequently made calims, especially before 1955. After 1970, claims regarding tar and nicotine content (including the Surgeon General's warning) were prevalent. Other frequently made calims found were calims about taste, cigarette construction and pleasure.

In an extension of the Ringold (1987) study, Ringold and Calfee (1989) studied the verbal aseertions found in 568 magazine cigarette advertisements from 1926 to 1986. This longitudinal and annual cross-sections study focussed on the manifest information content of the cigarette advertisements. Cigarette ad claims were coded into 12 categories of claims. Similar to the Ringold (1987) study, the authors found that health calims were the most predominant claims in both the longitudinal and annual corss-sections studies. Cigarette construction and taste were the other two most frequent claims found.

Another similar content analysis of cigarette advertisements was done by King *et.al.* (1991), which studied the changes in the visual imagery of cigarette advertisements in magazines through several areas of the cigarette and health controversy, i.e., from 1954-1986. The authors set out to do what was not done in the Ringold (1987) and Ringold and Calfee (1989) studies, i.e., the visual content of cigarette advertising. Just as in Weinberger *et.al.*'s study (1981), the authors found a significant change in the frequency and visual imagery of cigarette advertisements after the broadcast ad ban. They are the increased frequency, size, pictorial representations, and model activity portrayals in the magazine cigarette advertisements.

Warner (1985) studied 716 cigarette advertisements found in *Time* magazine from 1929 to 1984. Warner's focus is on the tobacco industry's "educational strategies" in promoting a well-publisized hazardous product with harmful



consequences. Warner found that health themes of cigarette advertisements increased correspondingly with the major health "scare" about smoking, such as the Surgeon General's report and emergence of nonsmokers' right movement. In addition, Warner also found that the tobacco industry's response to health concerns of smoking were to use advertisements conveying themes and imageris of "vibrant, physically fit, successful, sociable, and sexy people in physically active or glamorous setting" (Warner, 1985, p. 125).

In another study, Warner and Goldenhar (1989) studied 99 magazines to compare their cigarette advertising revenues and their coverage of smoking and health issues both before and after the broadcast ad ban of 1971. The authors found that after the broadcast ad ban was imposed in 1971, magazines enjoyed a "windfall" in the form of increased advertisements. This was accompanied with significant decrease in coverage of smoking and health issues, especially among those magazines that accepted cigarette advertising.

Altman *et.al.*, (1987) studied how the tobacco industry has set out to attract the women and minority segments of the markets. This study compared the themes of cigarette ads in magazines with diverse readerships from 1960 to 1985. The authors found that cigarette advertisements which emphasized the act of smoking decreased but they are increasingly associated with health and vitality, such as the increase of advertisements using low-tar and low-invtotine appeal as well as the use of images of adventure and risk.

Like Altman *et.al.*, Albright *et.al.*, (1988) analyzed cigarette advertisements in eight popular magazines from 1960 to 1985. The magazines were selected from the categories of youth, women and adult (general). The authors found that the proportion of cigarette advertisements placed on women and youth-oriented magazines have increased substantially since the late 1960s, and especially after the broadcast ad ban of 1971. Albright *et.al.*, concluded that the tobacco industry is targeting these segments in light of the general decline in the traditional adult male smoking market.

Weinberger *et.al.*, (1981) examined the extent and nature of changes in cigarette advertising during the pre- and post-broadcast era, ie., from 1957 to 1977. The suthors found that magazine advertising by all the six major tobacco manudacturers increased by eightfold after the broadcast ad

ban of 1971. In addition, all the manufacturers allocated more than half of their ad spending (from 49.5 - 56.8 percent) in the magazines. Weinberger *et.al.*, also discovered that there is a distinct change in the magazine cigarette advertisements. This includes the increase in the use of color, full page-size advertisements, and special positioning, such as on right-hand pages and double page advertisements. This is interpreted by the authors as an attempt by the cigarette advertisers to exploit and improve the exposure value of cigarette advertisements after the broadcast ad ban.

### The Samples

All direct and indirect cigarette advertisements which appeared in the *New Straits Times (NST)* from January 1993 to January 1995 were chosen for the study. The *NST* was chosen as it is one of the most established and nationally circulated newspapers in Malaysia. A total of 319 direct and indirect cigarette advertisements were found in the period studied. Only the non-identical ads were selected for the final content analysis and all identical ads were excluded from the study.

This yielded a final sample of 29 direct cigarette ads (15 percent) and 159 indirect cigarette ads (85 percent) selected from the *New Straits Times*. Of the indirect ads, 106 (67 percent) were from the period on or before May 15, 1994, the enforcement date of the ban of direct cigarette ads in the print media by the government. A remainder of 53 indirect cigarette ads (933 percent) were found in the period after the ban.

### Coding

Each advertisement was coded for the presence or absence of the 8 themes, ie., Lively, Nature, Romance, Maturity, Wealth, Success, Sophistication, and Individualism. The detailed description of each theme is presented in Table 1 in page 8. Other variables coded include the date, the brand advertised, the activities and models portrayed, as well as the physical features of the ads.

Two independent coders (college students) were trained on the technique of content analysis and the coding categories used in this study. After the initial training, they were pretested on their coding by being given random samples of

the ads to be coded. When the coders were familiarized with the coding scheme, they coded all the ads independently. Their disagreements in the coding decisions were mediated by this researcher.

TABLE 1.  
Description of  
Themes

**Lively/Adventure<sup>a</sup>** : Active and athletic, exuberant, full of life, energy, "lift", pep, vim, vigor, vitality, zest; adventuresome, bold, brave, fearless, determined, competitive, fighting, striving, daring, wild, risk taking.

**Nature Scene<sup>a</sup>** : Settings commonly seen as wholesome, clean, and pure, such as springs, glaciers, mountain tops, streams, waterfalls, parks, forests, fields; amidst new fallen snow, spring rains or showers.

**Romance/Sensuality**: The display of affection between men and women, such as the stance of embracing, kissing and winking of eye, ect.

**Maturity** : Indication of coming of age, being responsible, dominant and in control.

**Wealth/Luxury**: The display of imageries of wealth and riches, such as gold, treasures, and luxurious merchandise.

**Success/Glamor**: Depiction of situations where one wins the prize or trophy, or other significant accomplishments, enjoying adulation, and celebrity status.

**Sophistication**: Portrayal of distinct features of upper-classness and cosmopolitan lifestyles.

**Individualism** : Depiction of the lone model and projection of the spirit of independence in the ad.

<sup>a</sup>Adapted from Richard W. Pollay (1984), "Twentieth-Century Magazine Advertising: Determinants of Informativeness", *Written Communication*, 1, 1, 56-77; and

Richard W. Pollay (1990), "Information and Imagery in Contemporary Canadian Cigarette Ads", in *The Proceedings of the 1990 Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*, Patricia A. Stout (Ed.), College of Communication, Department of Advertising, The University of Texas at Austin.

The overall intercoder reliability coefficient for the themes studied as determined by using Scott's *pi* was .84. Scott's *pi* was used because it is a more rigorous method of



determining intercoder reliability since it corrects for chance agreement between the coders. As the coding of themes in this study represented a form of categorical data (absence or presence of themes), it was even more crucial that chance agreements between the coders be eliminated. Thus, the intercoder reliability achieved for a study of this nature was sufficient. It was also above the standard of 0.80 set by Kassarian (1977).

### Findings

A total of 319 cigarette advertisements representing 15 brands were found in the *NST* from January 1993 to January 1995. Out of this, 188 non-identical ads were selected for the content analysis. More than half (54 percent) of the samples studied were from 1994 while 40 percent were from 1993 and another 6 percent were from 1995. The total number of ad samples representing the different cigarette brands and their total samples selected for this study can be seen in Table 2.

Brand	Total Ads Found Direct Indirect	Total Ads Studied Direct Indirect
Benson & Hedges	9 38	2 21
Cartier Santos	24 0	5 0
Dunhill	14 48	2 47
Kent	1 2	1 9
Lucky Strike	0 7	0 6
Marlboro	10 27	7 14
Mild Seven	25 13	3 5
More	2 0	1 0
Pall Mall	0 2	0 2
Perilly's	5 7	0 7
Peter Stuyvesant	16 13	4 13
Rothmans	0 2	0 2
Salem	0 41	0 32
Sampoerna	8 0	2 0
Virginia Gold	0 3	0 1
Winston	2 0	2 0
Total	116 203	29 159
Grand Total	319	188

TABLE 2.  
Direct and  
Indirect  
Cigarette Ads  
in the *NST*

The samples of the direct cigarette ads were relatively small compared to that of the indirect cigarette ads. This was mainly because direct cigarette ads in Malaysia featured only the cigarette pack and cigarettes - also called "tombstone" ad. This has resulted in little variations in the direct cigarette ads as often the same identical ads were found as multiple insertions. In this study, only the non-identical ads would be chosen for the content analysis. For example, a total of 12 Dunhill direct cigarette ads were found during the period studied, but only two non-identical ones were selected for this study.

In contrast, most of the indirect cigarette ads were non-identical because the tobacco firms can advertise a variety of products through this kind of ad. Thus, this accounted for the larger sample of non-identical indirect cigarette ads. Another reason the indirect cigarette ads outnumbered the direct cigarette ads was because direct cigarette ads in the print media were banned beginning May 16, 1994, while indirect cigarette ads continued to be allowed.

Most of the ads (89 percent) were of full-page size and nearly all of them were in color (99 percent) and made use of both photographs and artwork. In addition, nearly all of the indirect cigarette ads in the newspaper made use of the tobacco brands' brand name, colors, and slogan as they were used in the direct ad. Another 82 percent of the indirect cigarette ads portrayed the brand logo of the direct cigarette ad.

### Themes

More than half (59 percent) of the direct cigarette ads in the *NST* did not have any themes present. Another 34 percent had one theme present, while the remaining seven percent had two themes present. As for the indirect cigarette ads in the *NST*, they seemed to exhibit more themes than the direct cigarette ads. Nearly all the ads (95 percent) had between one and four themes. The majority of the ads had between one and two themes (42 and 31 percent respectively). This information is summarized in Table 3.



Categories of Cigarette Ads		NOS. of Themes Present in ADS					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
Direct cigarette Ads in NST	N (%)	17 (59)	10 (34)	2 (7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST	N (%)	6 (4)	67 (42)	49 (7)	27 (17)	9 (6)	1 (1)
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST On/ Bef. 15/5/94	N (%)	4 (4)	49 (46)	25 (24)	20 (19)	7 (7)	1 (1)
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST On/ Aft. 16/5/94	N (%)	2 (4)	18 (34)	24 (45)	7 (13)	2 (4)	0 (0)

TABLE 3.  
Total Nubmer  
of Themes  
Found in Ad  
Samples

N denotes the number of ads within the ad category with X number of themes present. The corresponding percentage is expressed beneath it.

It can also be observed that the indirect cigarette ads in the NST both before and after the government banned direct cigarette ads in the newspaper on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1994, exhibited very similar number of themes. The bulk of the ads have between one and three themes.

Categories of Cigarettes Ads	Mean Number of Themes
Direct cigarette Ads in NST	0.48
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST	1.81
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST On/Before 15/5/94	1.81
Indirect Cigarette Ads in NST On/After 16/5/94	1.79

TABLE 4.  
Mean Number  
of Themes  
Found in Ad  
Samples

As can be seen from Table 4 above, the direct cigarette ads in the NST exhibited the lowest mean number of them, ie., 0.48. The cigarette ads in the NST had mean themes of 1.81. The indirect cigarette ads in the newspaper were thus

able to depict more themes than the direct cigarette ads. The proportions of the individual themes found in the various categories of ads studied are presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

TABLE 5.  
Themes  
Present in the  
Direct and  
Indirect Ads  
of the NST

Themes	Cigarette ADS From NST			
	Direct ADS		Indirect ADS	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Adventure	0	0	126	79
Nature	8	28	26	16
Romance	0	0	98	6
Maturity	0	0	1	1
Wealth	2	7	41	26
Success	0	0	17	11
Sophistication	2	7	37	23
Individualism	2	7	40	19

TABLE 6.  
Themes  
Present in the  
Indirect Ads  
in the NST  
Before and  
After the  
Direct Ad Ban  
of May 1994

Themes	Before Ban		After Ban	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Adventure	85	80	41	77
Nature	13	12	13	24
Romance	6	6	3	6
Maturity	1	1	0	0
Wealth	26	24	15	28
Success	14	13	3	6
Sophistication	26	24	11	21
Individualism	21	20	9	17

The most exhibited theme in the direct cigarette ads in the NST was the theme of Nature, which was found in 28 percent of the ads. Three other themes were found in 7 percent of the ads, ie., Wealth, Sophistication and Individualism. No ads were found for the other themes.

As for the indirect cigarette ads in the NST, six of the eight themes studied were found in a least 10 percent of the ads. The most exhibited theme was Adventure, which was found in 79 percent of the ads. This was followed by the theme of Wealth, which was found in 26 percent of the ads.

### Data Analysis

This study assumed that all the eight themes studied were equally weighted and that the numbers of these themes found in an advertisement represented the themes of the ad. The data was analyzed with the categorical data modeling (CATMOD) procedure of SAS. CATMOD was used in this study since the data can be summarized in a contingency table.

### Statistical Model

A quantitative model was derived to analyze the themes found in the ads. This model is represented below as:

$$\mu_i = \mu + \alpha_i$$

where

$\mu_i$  represents the average theme of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  category (subpopulation) of ads studied,

$\mu$  represents the overall average theme, and

$\alpha_i$  with  $\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 + \alpha_4 = 0$  representing the deviation of  $\mu_i$  from the overall average ( $\mu$ ).

The categories (subpopulations) of ads studied were:

$\mu_1$  : ndirect advertisements in the NST on or before May 15, 1994.

$\mu_2$  : indirect advertisements in the NST on or after May 16, 1994.

$\mu_3$  : direct cigarette ads in the NST

$\mu_4$  : indirect cigarette ads in the NST

### Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated in this study to test for significant differences between the themes of the categories of cigarette ads. These hypotheses are presented below:

H1: There is no significant difference between the themes of the direct cigarette ads and the indirect cigarette ads in the *New Stratis Times* ( $H_0 : \mu_3 = \mu_4$ )

H2: The themes of the indirect advertisements in the *New Straits Times* on or before May 15 1994 (the last day direct cigarette ads are allowed to appear in newspapers) do not differ significantly from those of the indirect cigarette



advertisements on or after May 16 1994 ( $H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$ ). Statistical analysis of the themes from the sample studied showed that at a confidence level of .05, only the last hypothesis, which assumes no difference in the themes of the indirect cigarette ads before and after the direct cigarette ad ban of May 15 1994, cannot be rejected. This can be seen in Table 7.

TABLE 7.  
Chi Square  
Statistics  
and its p-  
value

Hypothesis Tested	Chi-Square	p-value
Direct Ads vs. Indirect Ads of NST	89.32	0.0000
Indirect Ads of NST on/before 5/15/94 vs. Indirect Ads on/after 5/16/94	0.01	0.9037

Hypotheses 1 is rejected at the 0.05 level. This means that there are significant differences between the themes of the direct cigarette ads and that of indirect cigarette ads in the NST.

The rejection of the above hypothesis is probably due to the different products being advertised in the various categories of cigarette ads. Since legislative requirements restricted the direct cigarette ads in the newspaper to present only the cigarettes and cigarette packs, this greatly limited the direct ads in terms of themes presented. On the contrary, this requirement was not imposed on the indirect cigarette ads.

### Summary and Conclusion

Tobacco companies in Malaysia have been able to capitalize and take advantage of the regulatory restrictions imposed on the cigarette ads. This was evidenced by both the direct ads and indirect cigarette ads found in this study. Nearly all the ads in the *New Straits Times* were in full page size, and in full color. In addition, the tobacco companies were able to circumvent the ban of direct cigarette commercials in the broadcast media by the government in 1982 by using the indirect cigarette commercials to continue to advertise cigarette

brands on television. This form of advertising, which the industry calls trademark diversification ads (TMD ads), promotes the tobacco companies' sponsorship of sports, television programs, concerts, merchandise and other products. These TMD ads also appeared on print and other media, such as in billboards. Even though the government further banned the direct ad from the print media in 1994, the indirect cigarette ads continued to be allowed in both the print and broadcast media.

This study showed that the tobacco companies were able to capitalize on the weakness of the regulation in that indirect cigarette ads bearing the brandname or direct cigarette ads' where allowed. The tobacco companies were able to use these ads to depict certain lifestyles that were admirable and desirable, such as indulgence in leisure, adventure and competitive sports.

Results of this study also showed that the indirect cigarette ads exhibited more themes than the direct cigarette ads. The tobacco companies have used the indirect cigarette ads to project the themes of Adventure, Wealth and Sophistication. In contrast, the direct cigarette ads exhibited significantly fewer themes. The most commonly found theme in the direct cigarette ads in the newspaper was the theme of Nature. The tobacco companies were thus able to compensate for what they could not do with the direct cigarette ads through the indirect cigarette ads. The ubiquity of the indirect ads in the Malaysian mass media, this presented the tobacco companies enormous opportunities to persuade and influence the audience. This has serious implications for the continuing regulatory debates and public policy considerations with regard to the indirect cigarette ads amongst the interested parties (government, tobacco industry, advertising industry, health groups and consumer movement) in Malaysia.

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